SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION
BULLETIN

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ALBERT BENDER NUMBER

"HIMSELF"

Albert Bender

By RALPH STACKPOLE

Albert Bender slid through pre-earthquake and pre-prohibition San Francisco, earthquake and prohibition San Francisco and post-earthquake and post-prohibition San Francisco without a scratch.

What I want to say is this: San Francisco in her young crude growing pains of gaiety, corruption, disaster, reconstruction and repeated and recurring changes, has caused many men to harden or soften entirely and go under. Albert Bender has remained Albert Bender through it all.

Born in Ireland, the Celtic poets were his great early influence. Then dumped in the new wild country where there were two careers of attraction for the Irish: politics and the police force. Lack of height and weight made impossible the latter, and shyness and timidity the first difficult.

How insurance was the chosen field or how destiny fastened this business on Albert is not important. But this is important. On every policy there is a commission. Friends mean always more business and in that Albert has no rival—he has piled up friends as a banker piles up dollars.

Yachts, race-horses, world tours are outlets for spending money, but very early the Celtic poets told Albert of certain dream things that are lasting, as lasting as the bleak rocky cliffs around the Bay of Fingal. And that there is in these dream things or products of creative imagination an answer to the whole range of human struggle.

Albert Bender, here in the crude West, saw the pitiable struggle of all the arts. And aiding the arts, supporting the arts, spending his commissions (all above his rent and board) has been his life work. This work he has kept up year after year with the regularity of the sunrise.

These dream things we spoke of are sometimes called Culture, whether it be painting, sculpture, poetry or music, jade or Japanese prints. One remembers the poem of T. S. Elliot where he speaks of the lovely arms, "I have known them all." Well, in the Arts Albert Bender has known them all.

On a chart explaining evolution one sees the monkey branch off and remain monkey, and another group branch off and become men. Some of us too have seen a few years of San Francisco history; have seen men, thousands of them, bump their heads on the hard flinty walls of short-sighted material things and inevitably court disaster. Albert has traveled another road. Watch Albert walk down Montgomery Street. Watch him smile and shake hands again and again. Go with him to his office; see the distinguished people waiting to see him. In the group will probably be an artist with a portfolio.

Observe Albert at a board meeting (he is on a dozen). His usual answer to a difficult situation is, "I'll give so much. I'll give it all." See Albert in society or at a gay artists' party, hear his hearty laugh and now look the other way. A smack resounds around the room; he has just kissed some pretty girl.

Somehow we feel we know a little about Albert's journeyings to his success with life, why he is famous, why his smile is genuine, and we accept it as something in the fourth dimension, without probe or analysis. But this we can state as a cold fact—although at a party Albert has lost much of his former shyness and timidity, he remains true to type, a dreamer who is making it possible for the new type to create.

ANNE BREMER MEMORIAL LIBRARY—CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
Gift of Albert Bender

A Discussion of Aesthetics

By STEPHEN C. PEPPER

Aesthetics and the Layman

Aesthetics is a forbidding word. Artists are suspicious of it, laymen are frightened at it. Yet the subject-matter of aesthetics is the highest human values. The artist creates these values, and the layman acknowledges them and is often proud of them, yet both artists and laymen do not seem to want to know about them. Are they justified in this attitude? Would the values perhaps be lost in thinking about them? Or are artists and laymen half justified and half unjustified, and have they unwittingly drawn the issue too sharply?

Take the layman. There is no question, is there, that he does on the whole resent being told what he should like and what he should not like? Is not this the significance of that common saying of his, "I do not know much about art, but I know what I like"? Only a few days ago an embarrassed layman said these very words to me. He knew they were a cliché. But they are more than a cliché; they have become a sort of proverb. And though the gentleman smiled as he repeated the maxim, I felt an undertone of seriousness. He was apologizing for not having my familiarity with a particular sort of art, he was acknowledging a possible value in my experience, but he was also hinting that my experience did not bear upon his likes and dislikes, and that, if I did not mind, we should drop the subject.

Now, it cannot be denied there is something to be said for this embarrassed person's attitude —something that comes out clearly in contrast with the eagerness of another kind of layman who always wants to like or dislike the "right" things, who gets his yearly enthusiasms as he gets his suits of clothes and, if in 1930 the rage is over Modigliani, he rages over Modigliani, and if in 1935 it is over Benton, he rages over Benton. My layman is at least sincere. And yet, for all his sincerity, might he not profit by a little of the attitude of the other layman, a little willingness to consider and model himself on the judgments of others?

The question, of course, is: on the judgments of what others? Not surely on the judgments of the social set of 1930 or 1935, however good their judgments may be. Then, on the judgments

of what others? Well, that is precisely one of the questions with which aesthetics deals.

And the sort of answer that aesthetics gives to this question is in general something like this. The likes and dislikes of a person at any time are, of course, whatever they are. It is foolish for a person to try to think they are anything different —to try to think he likes negro sculpture when he shudders at the sight of it; still more foolish for a person to say anything different—to say he likes negro sculpture when he feels and knows he does not. He should always be sincere about his feelings. That is no more than common intellectual and emotional honesty. On the other hand, a person's likes and dislikes can change, and with experience do change. And there is some reason to respect the judgment and feelings of a person experienced in a type of art in a way one cannot respect these in an inexperienced person.

What the grounds are for this respect is a matter on which writers in different schools of aesthetics differ. But that there is this difference of respect and that there are good grounds for it, is something that few competent writers on aesthetics have denied, and these few have got into so much trouble by denying it that they constitute an excellent case of the exception which proves the rule. The facts are too glaring for denial. There is a difference between the statues of Michelangelo and Donatello and some Italian journeyman's work exhibited on the banks of the Arno or shipped to America and exhibited in the shop windows on Geary Street. There is a difference between a Coca-Cola advertisement and Titian's Assumption of the Virgin. And there is a sense in saying that if a layman prefers the advertisement, his preference is not as good as if he preferred Titian. We respect him for saying what he likes, but we should respect him more if he knew something about art.

Aesthetics and the Artist

The suspicion of the artist towards aesthetics is quite different from that of the layman. The layman resents the implied disparagement of his taste. On that score the artist is secure. The artist generally knows his field better than the writer on aesthetics, is surer of his judgments and justifiably surer. The layman turns away from aesthetics because he knows less than the writer on aesthetics, the artist because he knows more. Why should an artist bother with discussions on the nature of beauty and the grounds of critical judgment, when he creates beauty and judges by instinct? Why should he read about psychologists' laborious experiments on preferences and discriminations, when he in his expert technique performs fifty such experiments in a morning, and his style is a residuum of thousands of such experiments made over years? Let the aesthetical philosopher and psychologist come to him, if they will; why should he go to them?

Why? Certainly not for anything they can give him in his own metier. He is their teacher there. His productions are their basic facts. His conclusions are the philosopher's points of departure for thought and theory, his massive experiments the psychologist's source of suggestion for meticulous laboratory experiments. Both philosopher and psychologist often with great labor discover what he was always aware of by intuition.

Moreover, if he knows these things by intuition, will not an analytical knowledge of them obstruct his inspiration? May he not, like the centipede who began to wonder how he walked, lose his power of locomotion? Not only may aesthetics be of no use to him, it may actually injure him.

In all of this there is a lot of truth. And it must furthermore be added that for the ways of genius there are no rules. But the converse does not hold, that where there are no rules there is genius. Nor does it hold that many geniuses have not in large degree been made so by studying and obeying rules. And lastly, it is a sad but obvious fact that out of many thousands of artists only one is a genius.

The upshot of these remarks is that for many artists, especially in the earlier stages of their training, whether it be self-training or in schools, there may be a good deal of value in a certain amount of study of aesthetics. But this value will not have a direct bearing on their work so much as an indirect.

One of the greatest dangers to which an artist is subject is over-specialization. This does no harm to a man's success if he happens to follow a mode or style of art which is aesthetically rich and sound. But if an artist happens to turn into a blind alley of art, how will he come out of it? I do not say that some broader knowledge of the aesthetic field, of other arts than his own, of other branches of his own art, of the history of art in his own culture, and a comparison of this with other cultures—would pull him out, but it might well do so. For if there is one thing that a study of aesthetics can furnish, it is a broad view of the field of the arts. It does furnish some idea of the relative values of things, and may help a man in some degree to see himself as others see him. Might not a Dadaist have profited from a

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San Francisco Art Association Bulletin

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To Americans, November and Thanksgiving are synonymous. To the artists of San Francisco, Thanksgiving usually means Albert Bender.

So it is in a spirit of affectionate appreciation that the editors of the San Francisco *Art Association Bulletin* dedicate this issue to Albert, our genial and sympathetic friend.

* * *

We welcome this month as a new contributor Prof. Stephen C. Pepper of the University of California. Our small contact makes us appreciate the reasons for Prof. Pepper's popularity on the campus.

* * *

The editor congratulates the Art Center Galleries on its series of stimulating exhibitions this fall. Dorothy Duncan's distinguished one-man show, William Hesthal's vital exhibition of paintings and drawings (both shown in October) and Ray Boynton's collection of pastels and water-colors (now hanging) make a journey to the little Art Center on Montgomery Street more than worth-while.

Juries Chosen for Annual

At a meeting of the artist members of the San Francisco Art Association held at the California School of Fine Arts on October 31st, the following were elected to serve on the jury for the Annual, which will be held in January:

Jury of Selection

Painting—Maurice Sterne, Mathew Barnes, Margaret Bruton, Ray Boynton, Nils Gren. Alternate, Harriet Whedon.

Sculpture—Ralph Stackpole, Sargent Johnsen, Adaline Kent. Alternate, Beniamino Bufano.

Jury of Awards — Maurice Sterne, Ray Boynton, Sargent Johnsen. Alternate, Lucien Labaudt.

Ray Boynton's exhibition, now hanging at the Art Center, offers most interesting material. The old Empire Mines in Grass Valley, running since 1854, are depicted. The mines, 3800 feet below the surface, are not open to visitors, and Boynton's admittance was a singular honor.

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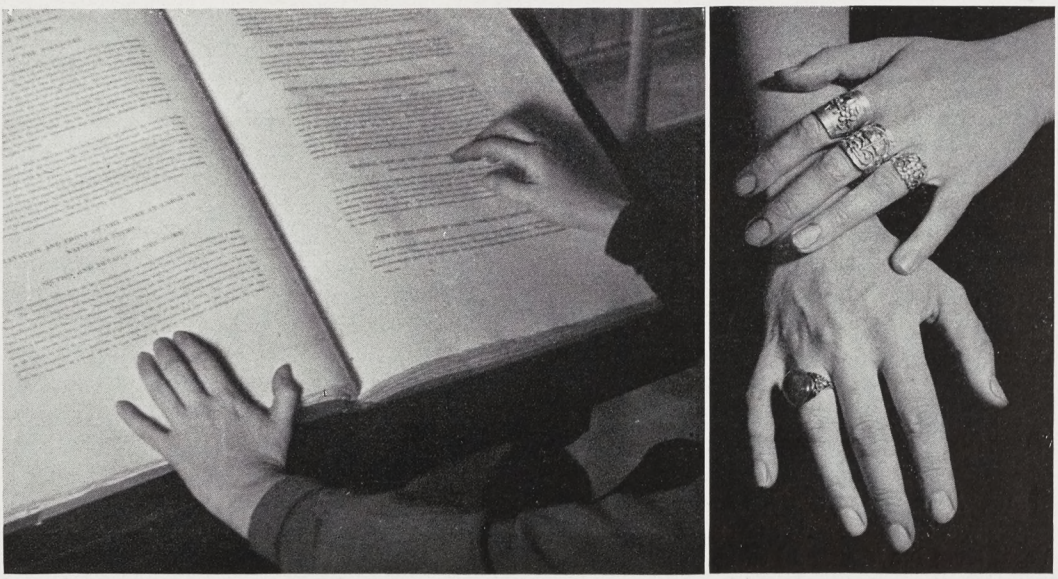
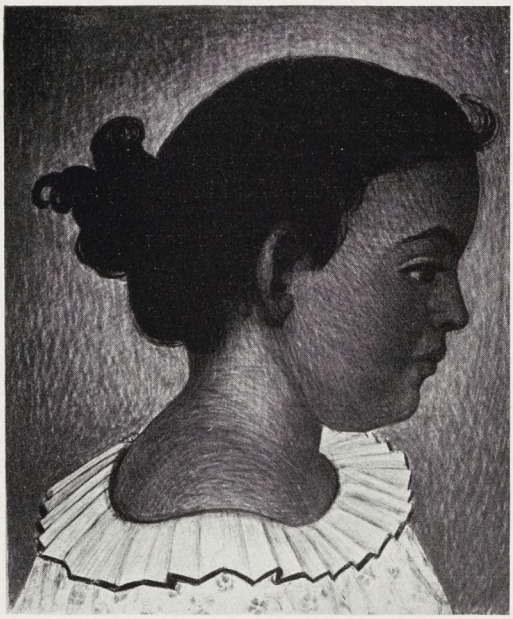
Emilie Sievert Weinberg had an exhibition of oils at the Haggin Memorial Museum, Stockton, in October. She will hold a one-man show at a downtown gallery after Christmas.

Other Gifts from Albert Bender





HEAD IN TEMPERA, *by Dorothy Puccinelli*
One of Albert Bender's many gifts to the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Fourth Parilla to Be Held in January

A committee has been formed to consider plans for the San Francisco Art Association's fourth annual Parilla and Ball to be held in January, 1936. Full details, including the period, will be announced in the December Bulletin.

Art School Student-Body Formed

The students of the California School of Fine Arts have organized this fall with lively determination and foresight.

On Friday afternoon, October 18th, their first informal tea, honoring Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Sterne, proved a most delightful occasion.

On November 1st an exhibition of student work, juried and hung by the students themselves, was opened with a preview and tea.

This was the first exhibition of its kind held at the California School of Fine Arts.

It is the intention of the student body to act as the first link in the chain that will carry them on through the Alumni Association and its varied opportunities and ultimately to professional effort and the activities of the San Francisco Art Association.

Mrs. Ansley Salz will hold an exhibition of recent work at the Marie Sterner Galleries, New York, from November 25 through December 7.

Ray Boynton to Head Alumni

In compliance with its constitution the first complete change of officers occurs this fall within the Alumni Association, California School of Fine Arts.

Chosen by the Executive Council at its October meeting, Mr. Ray Boynton has consented to succeed Miss Marian Hartwell as president.

The Alumni Association has rounded out the first chapter in its history most auspiciously. The active membership keeps steadily increasing, 75 new members having joined since August. The enormous task of compiling files of potential members is practically completed.

Plans are under way for a members' exhibition, which will include decorative and commercial, as well as fine arts, to be held at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

The semi-annual dinner to be held in December will honor the new president, the new members and Dr. Grace McCann Morley, director of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

S. F. Society of Women Artists

The San Francisco Society of Women Artists invites the members of the San Francisco Art Association to be present at the opening of their tenth annual exhibition, Friday evening, November 15th, from half past eight until twelve o'clock, in the San Francisco Museum of Art.

The exhibition will be open to the public daily, from Saturday, November sixteenth, until Sunday, December fifteenth, inclusive, between the hours of twelve noon and ten p. m.

A Discussion of Aesthetics

(Continued from page 3)

study of aesthetics or a nineteenth or twentieth century "academic"?

Along the same line there is another point. I do not know how far an artist should try to be a competent critic of art. It is generally assumed that a painter is a competent judge of painting, and juries are selected usually from among painters on that assumption. Often the assumption is justified, but often it is not. A painter is, of course, a good judge of his own type of painting, but it does not follow that he is a competent judge of painting. To make the matter worse, if he is a good painter and a good judge of his own kind of painting, he is very likely to assume and to try to force others to assume that his own kind of painting constitutes the whole art of painting and that other ways of painting may be called by any name one pleases but they are not painting. For this sort of fallacy, a study of aesthetics is also a good corrective.

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November Exhibitions in Local Galleries

Amberg-Hirth, 165 Post St.: Weaving by Harry Green. New group of pottery by Glen Lukens. Figurines by Mary Feinstein. Weaving by Marjorie Slate. Screens by Herbert and Peter Foley. Metal Craft by Roy Wehr. Enamels by Helen Reynolds. Many advance suggestions for Christmas gifts.

Art Center, 730 Montgomery St. October 21 to November 2: Oil paintings and drawings by William Hesthal. November 3 to November 16: Pastels and drawings by Ray Boynton.

Artists Cooperative Gallery, 166 Geary St. October 14 to December 9: Group exhibitions in paintings, etchings and drawings by western artists.

Bay Region Art Association. November 10 to December 9: In Oakland Art Gallery, Municipal Auditorium, Oakland, First Annual Exhibition of oils, water-colors, tempera, pastels, block-prints, etchings, drawings, photography, sculpture, wood-carving, plastics and ceramics. Bay Region Art Gallery: General exhibition of artist members.

Berkeley Women's City Club. November 3 to November 6: Work of John Haley. November 3, preview.

California Palace of the Legion of Honor. November 15 to December 15: Exhibition by Californians. Through November: Porcelains from the collection of Mrs. A. B. Spreckels.

Courvoisier Galleries, 460 Post St. October 28 to November 16: New oil paintings and water-colors by Jane Berlandina.

Gelber-Lilienthal, 336 Sutter St. November 1 to November 15: Oil paintings and water-colors by Isobel West.

Gump Galleries. October 28 to November 9: Pastels and prints by Bruce Inverarity. November 4 to November 16: Water-colors and drawings by Eugene Ivanoff. November 18 to December 1: General exhibit of paintings and prints.

Oakland Art Gallery. To November 3: Annual Exhibition of water-colors, pastels and prints. November 9 to December 9: First Annual Exhibition of the Bay Region Art Association.

San Francisco Museum of Art. November 15 to December 15: Tenth Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists. Opening November 15: Ballet collection. Opening November 2: Field collection of contemporary paintings. Through November 12: French Impressionists. Through November to December 15: Gothic and Renaissance tapestries. Through December 2: Mexican Exhibition. Through November to December 2: English sporting prints.

Shell Building Gallery. October 15 to November 3: Children's portraits by Sebastian Simonet.

Sierra Club. October 28 to November 16: Water-colors and tempera by Leland Curtis.

Roy Vernon Sowers. Engravings, etchings and woodcuts by Albrecht Dürer. Fifteenth-century woodcuts. English prints.